IDW

DC

ISSUE

1

BATMAN™

THE MAXX™

ARKHAM DREAMS

SAM KIETH

ARKHAM DREAMS

STORY AND ART:

SAM KIETH

(AND A TIP OF THE HAT TO JOHN LAYMAN FOR PLOT ASSIST)

COLORIST: **RONDA PATTISON** | LETTERER: **SHAWN LEE**

EDITOR: SCOTT DUNBIER | PUBLISHER: GREG GOLDSTEIN

BATMAN CREATED BY BOB KANE WITH BILL FINGER

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THIS IS HOW I REMEMBER...

the OUTBACK

NOT THE AUSTRALIAN ONE FOUND ON MAPS, THE REAL ONE, THE ONE IN MY MIND.

WIDE OPEN PLAINS, HEART-POUNDING DANGERS, STRANGE SAVAGE BEASTS... I CAN SMELL RET' QUARK'N HUNTING AGAIN, FEEL THE CLEAR AIR, TOUCH EARTH THAT'S MOIST AND FERTILE. I SENSE THE JUNGLE QUEEN'S CREATURES ARE HEALTHY, PLENTIFUL AND FLOURISH.

FOR I AM THE MAXX, AND THIS IS HOW I REMEMBER THE MYSTERIOUS OUTBACK...

BUT SOMETHING'S WRONG.

WHERE THE HELL AM I? SOMETHING'S HAPPENED, THE GOD CLAN PEOPLE ARE UNHAPPY, RET' QUARK'N'S BELLY IS EMPTY.

THE OUTBACK FEELS DIFFERENT, THE SMELL OF BURNT EARTH, WINDY, FOREBODING CLOUDS, DROUGHT AND FAMINE HAUNT THE EMPTY PLAINS.

OUTBACK CREATURES FEED OFF AN AIR WHALE CARCASS, DESPERATE FOR NOURISHMENT.

THE LAND IS BARREN NOW, AND I SENSE THE JUNGLE QUEEN HAS RETREATED INTO HER LAIR.

WHAT CAUSED THIS DARK TOXIC CLOUD TO HAUNT THE OUTBACK?

I WAS IN THE BATMOBILE WHEN MY HEADLIGHTS CAUGHT SIGHT OF GOTHAM CITY'S HOMELESS SWEEP.

PART OF THE MAYOR'S NEW "CLEAN UP THE STREETS" INITIATIVE, WHICH HAS WORKED ITS WAY DOWN TO A COUPLE OF OVERZEALOUS OFFICERS OUTSIDE A SHELTER.

SOUP LINE

NOT THAT THE BULKY GUY IN RAGS BARGING OUT OF THE ALLEY AND RAVING LIKE A LUNATIC IS HELPING MATTERS ANY.

THE OUTBACK IS PLAGUED BY DISEASE, FERAL CREATURES ARE STARVING...!

CALM DOWN THERE, MY FRIEND, WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

I AM... *THE MAXX.*

...NOT WITH THOSE CLAWS IT'S NOT—YOUR NAME'S MORE LIKE "ARMED AND DANGEROUS."

YOU'RE UNDER ARREST.

SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT HERE. THERE'S SOMETHING CURIOUS ABOUT THIS STRANGER.

I'D LIKE TO COME ALONG, OFFICERS.

BUT... WAIT— WHERE AM I? WHERE IS THE OUTBACK?

OUTBACK? THIS GUY REALLY IS OUT TO LUNCH.

EN ROUTE TO COUNTY, THE OFFICERS WERE INSTRUCTED TO BRING "MAXX" TO...

ARKHAM ASYLUM

DR. DISPARU, IS IT? I'M SURPRISED TO FIND THIS HOMELESS MAN TRANSPORTED TO ARKHAM.

THIS PARTICULAR SUBJECT WAS FLAGGED BY THE CIA AS BEING... UNUSUAL... AND POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS.

LET ME ASK YOU, BATMAN, HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF THE "OUTBACK"?

IN AUSTRALIA?

NO. THIS IS A CODE NAME FOR FORGOTTEN OR PRIMAL PARTS OF THE HUMAN PSYCHE.

SO BY "OUTBACK," YOU MEAN THE UNCONSCIOUS MIND?

NO. THE OUTBACK IS *REAL.*

OUR COVERT SURVEILLANCE OF "THE MAXX" SUGGESTS HE MAY BE A PAWN OF VARIOUS ARKHAM VILLAINS WHO ARE USING TELEPATHY TO SNEAK INTO THIS OUTBACK DIMENSION.

TOWARD WHAT END?

TO ESCAPE ARKHAM AND USE THE OUTBACK'S ENERGIES TO WREAK HAVOC IN THE REAL WORLD.

NOT "REAL" AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, BUT THIS "OUTBACK" DOES CONTAIN VITAL INFORMATION BURIED IN CERTAIN PEOPLE'S MINDS.

THE OUTBACK IS DYING AND I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN RESCUE THE *JUNGLE QUEEN'S* LAND.

WHO IS THE *JUNGLE QUEEN?*

DAMN. THINKING OUT LOUD AGAIN.

A SHORT TIME LATER...

FORGIVE MY SUSPICIONS, DOCTOR, BUT WHAT EVIDENCE DO YOU HAVE OF THIS MAXX FELLOW'S INVOLVEMENT?

IT SEEMS QUITE A COINCIDENCE YOU ARE FOCUSED ON THE ONE HOMELESS MAN WHO POLICE APPREHENDED JUST AS I DROVE BY AND HELPED SUBDUE.

THERE IS HIGHLY CLASSIFIED GOVERNMENT INFORMATION THAT UNFORTUNATELY YOU ARE NOT PRIVY TO, BATMAN, AND MY CREDENTIALS ARE ABOVE REPROACH.

TRUST ME, WHAT SEEMS LIKE COINCIDENCE IN THE REAL WORLD ARE INEXTRICABLY INTERWOVEN INTO DREAM WORLDS AND NIGHTMARES, ESPECIALLY OF THOSE IN ARKHAM.

YOU STILL HAVEN'T ANSWERED MY QUESTION.

WHY *THE MAXX*?

THERE. SEE? HE'S UNDER NOW.

LOST IN THE DREAM WORLD... ***THE OUTBACK.***

"BUT WHOSE OUTBACK? HIS OWN? SOMEONE ELSE'S?

"I'M NOT SURE I APPROVE OF YOUR METHODS, DOCTOR."

ENOUGH, BATMAN. YOUR ANNOYING LITTLE QUESTIONS WON'T BE ANSWERED IN THIS DARK LITTLE LABORATORY...

MEANING?

YOU SEE, THE SENSORS CONNECTING AND TRACKING MAXX'S EXPERIENCES AREN'T JUST WIRED INTO HIS SKULL. THERE'S A "NEURO-WIFI" SENSOR THAT ALLOWS ME TO TAP INTO ANYONE'S BRAINWAVE PATTERNS.

WAIT, FEELING WEAK... DIZZY...

DON'T FIGHT IT, BAT-BREATH. YOU'RE SLIPPING DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE TOO, AND WILL SOON BE TRAPPED ALONGSIDE MAXX...

"...IN THE HELLISH, BARREN OUTBACK."

SO... THIS MUST BE THE OUTBACK?

YES, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT. THERE'S THE STENCH OF DEATH SEEPING INTO OUR PORES... CAN YOU FEEL IT?

YES. BUT LISTEN, MAXX, ALL THIS MAY NOT BE REAL, DO YOU REMEMBER THE DOCTOR WHO STRAPPED YOU ONTO THAT TABLE? HIS EXPERIMENT?

YEAH, KINDA. BUT DON'T BE CONFUSED BY THE SHADOWS OF THE OTHER WORLD, GRAY MAN, WITH THE OUTBACK. PAIN AFFECTS US IN WHAT YOU CALL THE REAL WORLD, TOO.

THE OUTBACK'S BURDENS ARE FAR-REACHING AND MORE DEADLY AND OMINOUS, LIKE A DISEASED TREE ROTTING FROM INSIDE OUT.

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

MY CLAW GOT STUCK.

I SWEAR THAT EVIL DOCTOR IS BEHIND IT ALL—WE ONLY HAVE MERE HOURS LEFT UNTIL THE OUTBACK'S AIR SUFFOCATES US AND WILD CREATURES FEAST ON OUR CORPSES.

I KNOW THIS TRUTH, FOR I AM...

THE MAXX

CRACK

JUST PULL IT OUT OF THE GROUND.

OH, YEAH. I FORGOT. THANKS.

NO PROBLEM.

SO, SINCE WE'RE POTENTIALLY IN PERIL HERE IN THIS OUTBACK, REAL OR NOT, LET'S FORMULATE A PLAN OF SURVIVAL—AND EVENTUAL ESCAPE. AN HOUR LEFT IS ALL WE HAVE, SO YOU SAID?

YEAH.

LISTEN, I DON'T SUPPOSE TIME HAS A DIFFERENT RATE OF DECAY HERE IN THE OUTBACK, COMPARED TO THE REGULAR WORLD?

SOMETIMES AN HOUR IN THE REAL WORLD IS LIKE A DAY IN THE OUTBACK.

INTERESTING. WE HAVE SOME POSSIBLE LEEWAY WITH TIME AT LEAST, IF NOT FROM ANY POTENTIAL PREDATORS.

ANYTHING EDIBLE AROUND HERE?

THERE'S CRABBITS.

A *CRABBIT?*

CROSS BETWEEN A CRAB AND A RABBIT.

NATURALLY.

WHAT ARE THE ODDS OF US CATCHING ONE?

CRABBITS ARE TOO SMALL TO FILL OUR TUMMIES. NOT LIKE AN *AIR WHALE.*

AIR WHALE? LET ME GUESS, CROSS BETWEEN A WHALE AND AN—

NO, NO, JUST A WHALE THAT SWIMS ITS WAY THROUGH THE AIR.

OF COURSE.

A WHOLE AIR WHALE IS WAY HARD FOR CREATURES OUR SIZE TO CATCH. MAYBE A DOZEN RET' QUARK'N OF THE GOD PEOPLE MIGHT BRING DOWN A WOUNDED OR BABY AIR WHALE.

THIS MORNING I SAW A DOZEN SPOTTED SEUSSADONS FEEDING ON A DEAD AIR WHALE CARCASS, BUT MOST ALL OF THE SMALLER OUTBACK CREATURES LIKE THE SEUSSADON HAVE DIED OFF.

HEY, GRAY MAN, SHOULDN'T WE BE OFF FIGHTING SOMETHING OR TRYING TO STOP THAT EVIL DOCTOR, INSTEAD OF TALKING ABOUT LUNCH?

GATHERING CLUES, MY FRIEND. INFORMATION CAN BE MORE POTENT THAN AMMUNITION. TELL ME MORE ABOUT THIS DETERIORATING OUTBACK WORLD OF YOURS.

THE OUTBACK IS A MIRROR OF THE ORDINARY WORLD, THEY REFLECT ONE ANOTHER, IN A WAY, EACH WORLD HAS TWO MEANINGS.

SO EVERY CREATURE IN THE OUTBACK... HAS A REAL-WORLD EQUIVALENT?

USUALLY, BUT NOT ALWAYS. IT'S CONFUSING. I DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND IT MYSELF.

THE JUNGLE QUEEN MIGHT KNOW. OR MAYBE ***MR. GONE***. BUT HE'S SOMEONE WE DON'T WANT TO MESS WITH. THANKFULLY THERE'S NO SIGN OF GONE IN THIS OUTBACK.

SO THIS IS NOT *YOUR* OUTBACK?

THE OUTBACK I PROTECT IS THE JUNGLE QUEEN'S, BUT I'M NOT SURE THIS IS HERS. I'VE SENSED AND SEEN SIMILAR CREATURES, BUT IT FEELS DIFFERENT SOMEHOW.

IF IT IS THE QUEEN'S OUTBACK, THEN SHE'S IN BIG TROUBLE IN THE OTHER WORLD. SHE MAY BE SICK OR DYING FOR ALL WE KNOW.

IN THE OTHER WORLD... THE JUNGLE QUEEN IS KNOWN ONLY AS "JULIE."

WELL, THEN, SEEMS LIKE LOCATING THIS QUEEN, WHEREVER SHE IS, IS A LOGICAL PLACE TO START... IN AS MUCH AS LOGIC EVEN APPLIES TO THIS LOOKING GLASS-ESQUE WORLD.

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT ANY OF THAT MEANS.

IF POSSIBLE, WE'LL FIND YOUR QUEEN.

AGREED. FOR I AM...

THE MAXX. YES, YES, WE ALREADY KNOW.

THE WEATHER IS SHIFTING RAPIDLY, STORMY CLOUDS THEN HOT AND HUMID, CHANGING ALMOST MINUTE BY MINUTE. IS THAT NORMAL FOR THIS WORLD?

I DUNNO. SOMETHING ELSE... I HAVEN'T SEEN A SINGLE ISZ IN THIS OUTBACK.

DARE I ASK, WHAT IS AN ISZ?

DOESN'T MATTER.

IT'S THE JUNGLE QUEEN'S FORTRESS, JUST ON THE HORIZON. BUT WEIRDLY, IT'S FLOATING—JUST OUT OF REACH.

CAREFUL, MAXX, IT MAY BE A TRAP. IT SEEMS IMPLAUSIBLE IT WOULD APPEAR JUST AS WE ARE SEEKING HER OUT.

THE WORD THE QUEEN USES IS "ARCHETYPAL." SOME PRIMAL PLACE TO RECOVER, HEAL FROM TRAUMA. IT'S DRAWING US CLOSER, CAN YOU FEEL IT, GRAY MAN?

I... I DON'T KNOW.

SHE'S IN THERE, I CAN FEEL HER POUNDING HEART... PULLING ME TO HER PRIMAL LAIR.

IS THERE EVEN A CHANCE THIS UNFAMILIAR LAND IS SOMEHOW MY OWN OUTBACK? I'VE HAD MY SHARE OF TRAUMATIC, SECRET CAVES.

MAXX, ASK YOURSELF, DOES THIS FEEL LIKE YOUR JUNGLE QUEEN'S LAIR?

DUNNO. SOMETHING IS CALLING TO ME.

WE MAY AS WELL CRAWL IN AND FIND OUT. YOU COMING?

NOT MUCH CHOICE.

NO, I CAN FEEL IT, ASSUMING I EVEN HAVE ONE—THIS DOES NOT FEEL LIKE MY OUTBACK.

ME EITHER.

YOU HEARD MY THOUGHTS?

NOW YOU'RE TALKING OUT LOUD, HEY, IT MUST BE CATCHING.

HELLO, MAXX. HELLO, STRANGER.

I'M THE *QUEEN OF THIS DEPLETED REALM.*

SO FAMILIAR, YET STRANGE. HER VOICE IS HYPNOTIC AND HAUNTING. HER GAZE SEEMS TO HOLD A DARING SECRET... DARE I GUESS? SURRENDER?

IF THIS IS NOT MY QUEEN, THEN WHAT IS THIS STRANGE LAND I AM TRAPPED WITHIN?

SORRY, BELOVED QUEEN, WE'VE ARRIVED FROM ANOTHER REALM AND HAVE FOUND YOUR WORLD AS YOU DESCRIBE, IS THERE SOME CHANGE OR EVIL WHICH INVADES YOUR KINGDOM?

TELL ME, WHAT OMINOUS CURSE AILS MY BARREN FIELDS?

NOT A CLUE.

I AM THE PURPLE QUEEN, AND I ANOINT YOU, WARRIOR MAXX AND GRAY STRANGER, TO RESCUE AND RECOVER WHATEVER INTERLOPERS AND TRESPASSERS HAVE INVADED MY FAIR LANDS.

THE CLUES TO RESCUE MY WORLD ARE ALREADY WITHIN YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS ARSENAL.

NOW GO.

SUDDENLY...

ARKHAM ASYLUM

YUCK, YUCK, WELL—IF THIS SHAVES A FEW MONTHS OFF MY PAROLE, THEN HOOK ME UP TO THE HOT WIRES, BOYS.

YOU'LL FIND IT RELATIVELY PAINLESS, MR. COBBLEPOT, I CAN ASSURE YOU. JUST BRING HIM THIS WAY, MEN.

I FELT THE STRANGEST SHUDDER, AS IF I'D BEEN THROUGH A WHOLE ORDEAL IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE.

CAN'T SEEM TO RECALL IT NOW, SOME DREAM OR FLASHBACK? BETTER SHAKE IT OFF.

DON'T YOU HAVE ANYTHING BETTER TO DO THAN GAWK AT THE ZOO ANIMALS? *YUCK, YUCK.*

NOW, DON'T WORRY, ***PENGUIN***, I PROMISE YOU WON'T FEEL A...

"...THING!"

ARRGGG, ANOTHER SURREAL JUMP TO THE OUTBACK FROM ARKHAM, BUT WITH NO SIGN OF THE JUNGLE QUEEN.

MAXX SEEMS AFFECTED AS WELL, JUDGING BY HIS SUDDEN WILLINGNESS TO SLICE ME UP.

MAXX, CALM DOWN, I'M YOUR FRIEND.

CRAZY IMAGES IN MY BRAIN—DARK ROOM, WIRES WITH SHOCKS, STRANGE LITTLE MAN IN GLASSES—IT ALL STARTED WHEN YOU APPEARED, THE GRAY STRANGER THE QUEEN WARNED ME ABOUT.

MAXX, STOP IT. CAN'T YOU SEE? IT'S DISPARU, HE'S BLOCKED OUR BRAINS FROM REMEMBERING OUR BEING TRAPPED IN THE PURPLE QUEEN'S OUTBACK.

OH.

PURPLE QUEEN—HOW DARE YOU SPEAK HER PURE NAME WITH YOUR UNWORTHY LIPS. HOW DO YOU EVEN KNOW ABOUT HER?

MAXX, I WAS STANDING RIGHT NEXT TO YOU BOTH.

WHAT'S *THAT?*

POP
POP
IT'S A DEADLY POISONOUS AIR BLOW FISH.
I TAKE IT THOSE POINTY PROTRUSIONS...
...CARRY THE VENOM?
POP
POP
POP
POP
POP
POP
POP
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POP
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POP
POP
POP
POP
YEAH, AND MORE KEEP COMING, YIKES!
NOW, THERE'S ONE MAIN TRICK, OTHER THAN AVOIDING THE POINTY POISONOUS QUILLS...
WHAT'S THAT?

...AVOID THE MOUTH.

TO BE CONTINUED!

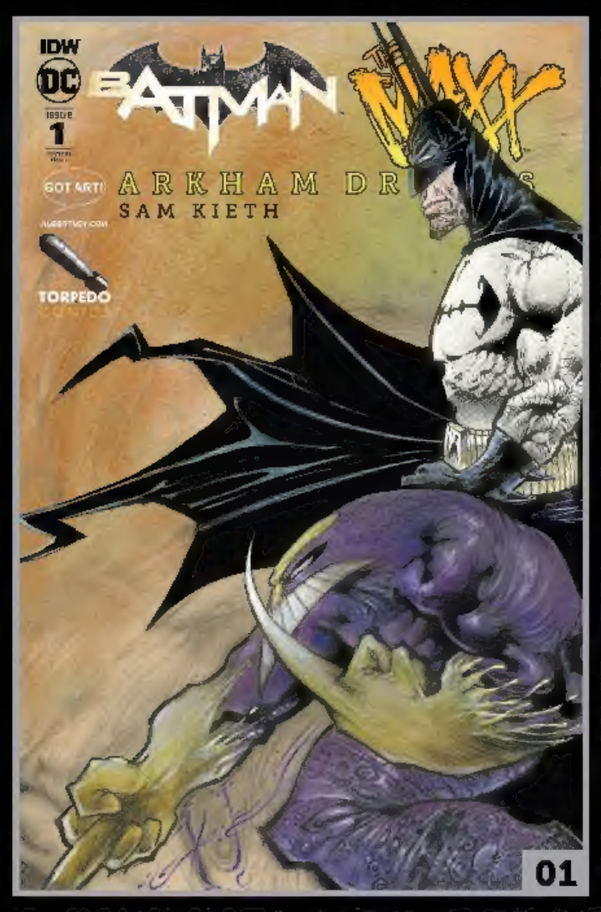
COVER A BY SAM KIETH

COVER B BY SAM KIETH

RETAILER INCENTIVE COVER BY JIM LEE | COLORS BY ALEX SINCLAIR

EXCLUSIVE COVER CHECKLIST

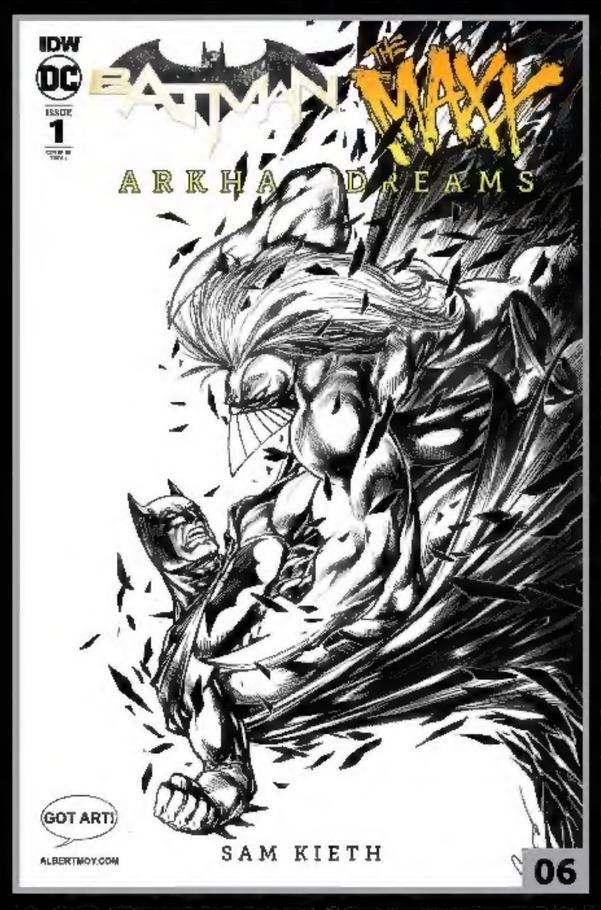
01. ALBERT MOY:
ART BY SAM KIETH



02-04. ALBERT MOY:
ART BY JAE LEE

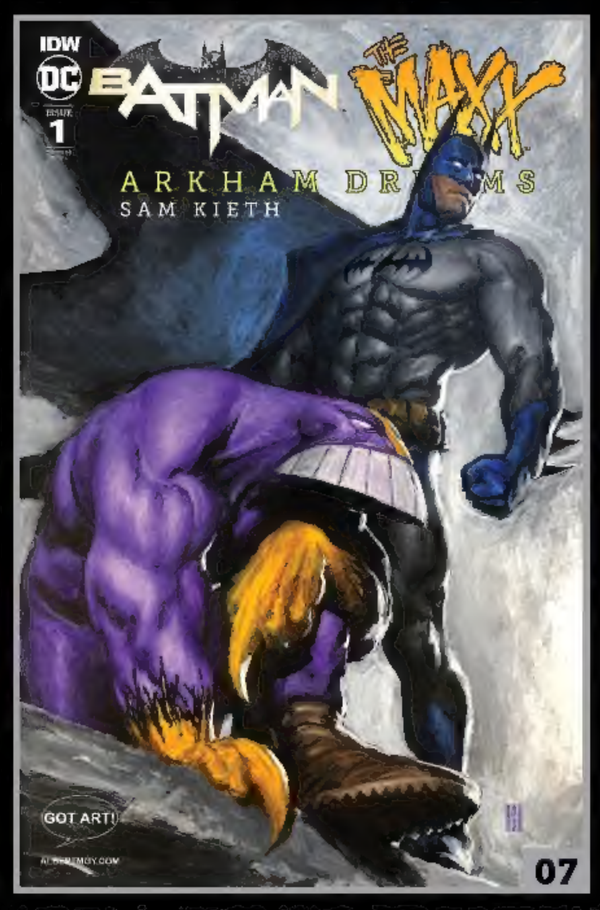
05-06. ALBERT MOY:
ART BY BUZZ

07. ALBERT MOY:
ART BY MIKE CHOI



08. ALBERT MOY:
ART BY CREEES LEE

09. ALBERT MOY:
ART BY TONY MOY

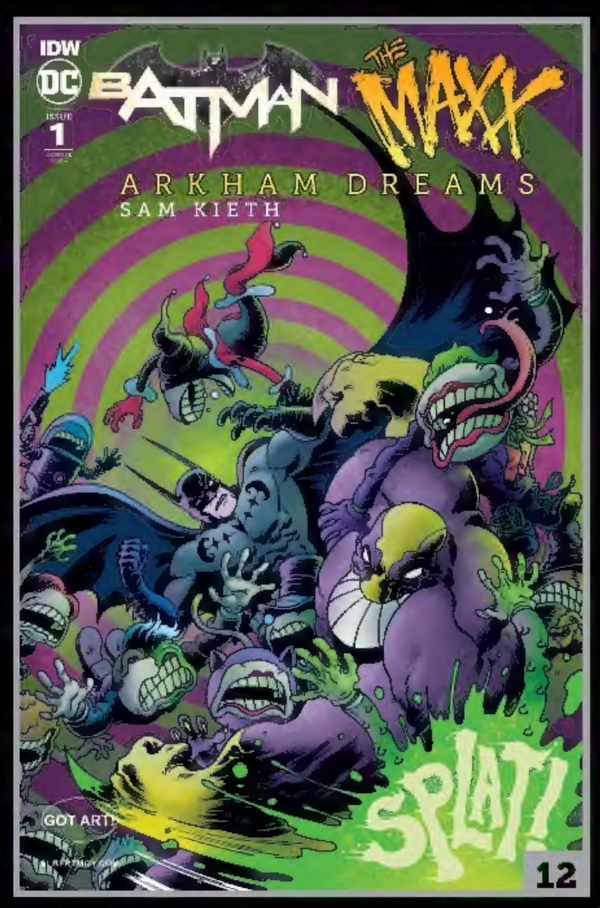


10. KWAN CHANG:
ART BY SAJAD SHAH

11. ALBERT MOY:
ART BY CHRIS UMINGA

12-13. ALBERT MOY:
ART BY C.P. WILSON III

14. COMICS ELITE:
ART BY JASON METCALFE



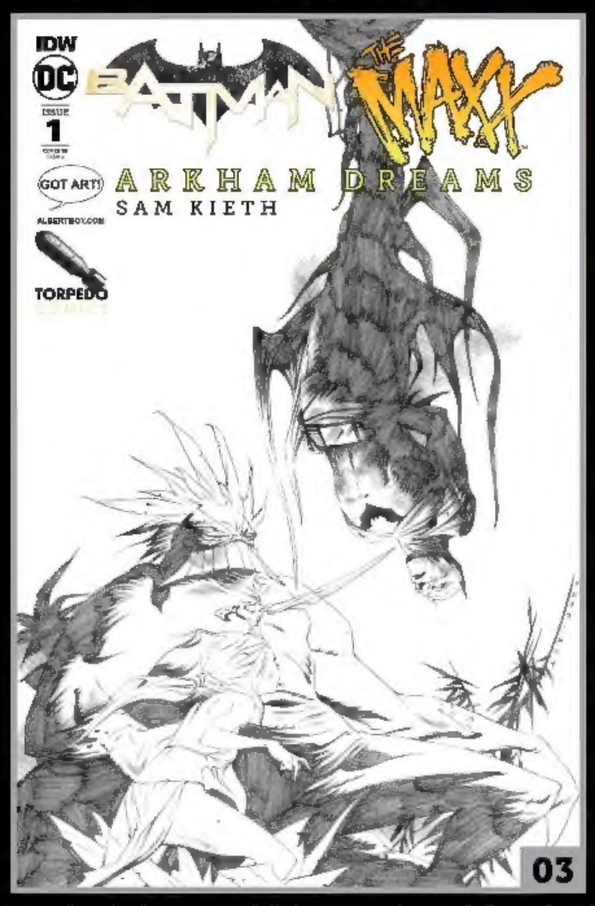
15. FRANKIE'S COMICS:
ART BY FELIPE MASSAFERA

16. ONESTOPCOMICSHOP.COM:
ART BY JOHNNY DESJARDINS

17. SCOTT'S COLLECTIBLES:
ART BY RICCARDO FEDERICI

18. SCOTT'S COLLECTIBLES:
ART BY FRANCESCO MATTINA

19. VAULT COLLECTIBLES:
ART BY NATHAN SZERDY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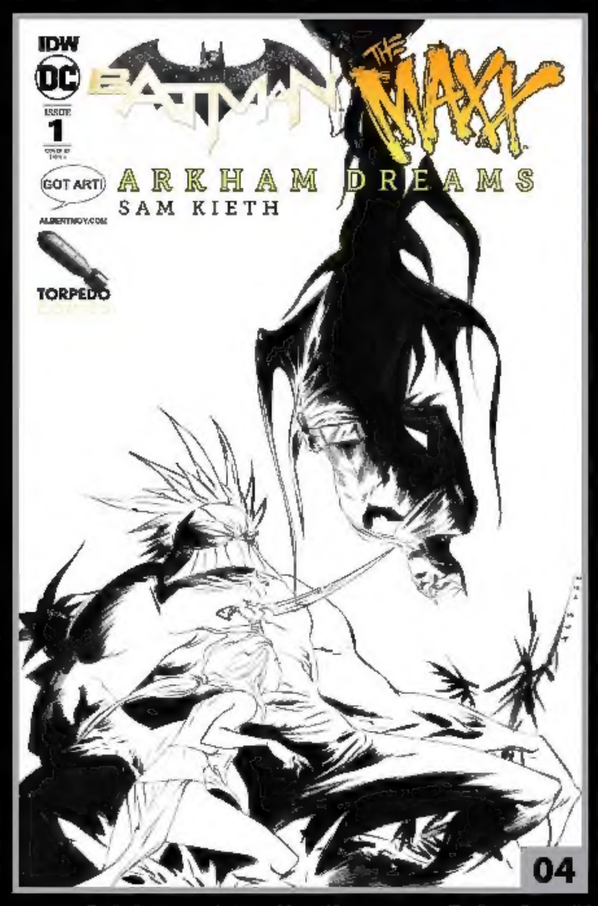
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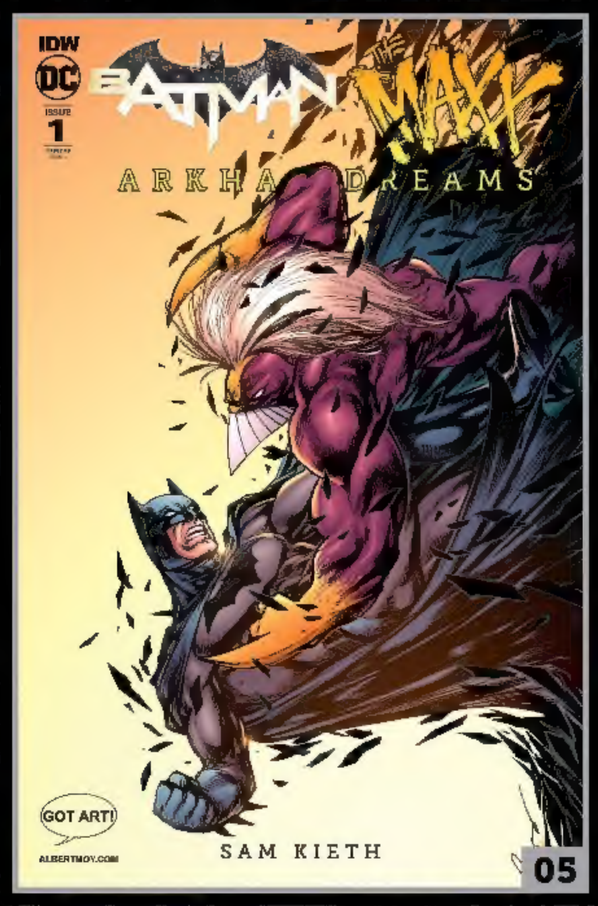
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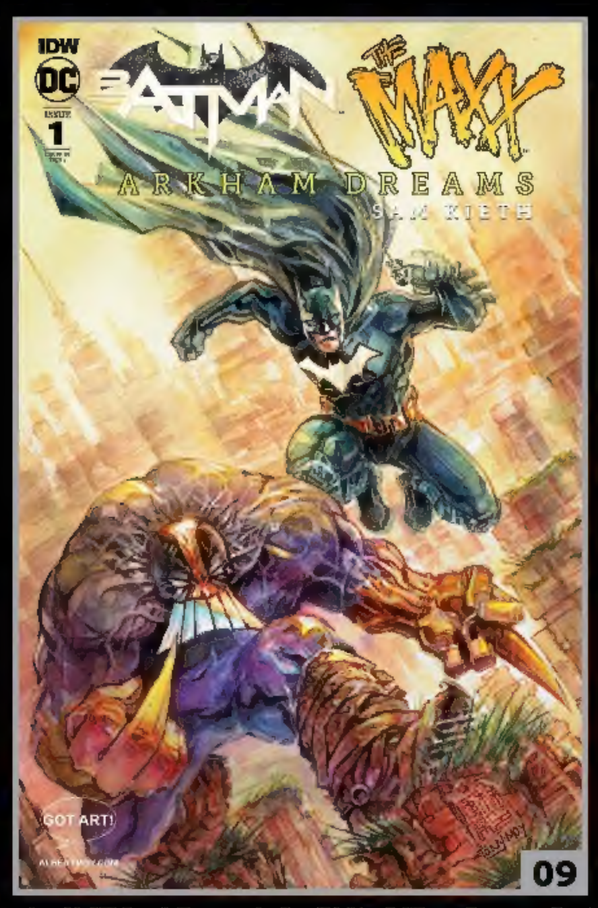
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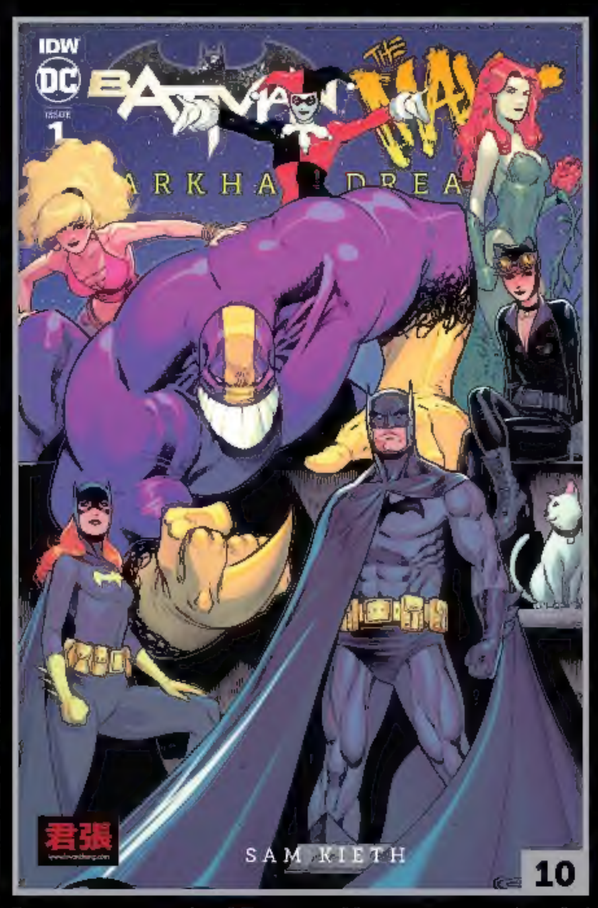
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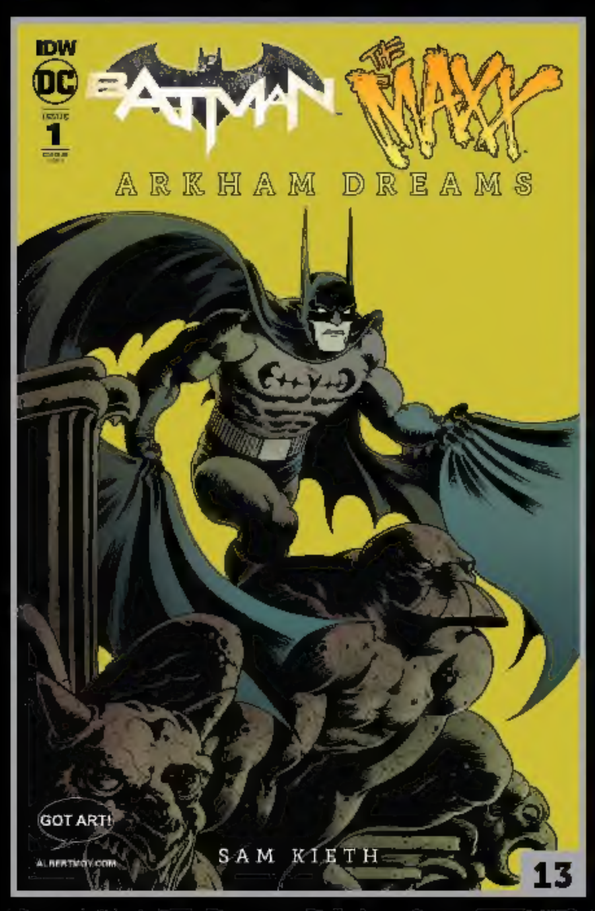
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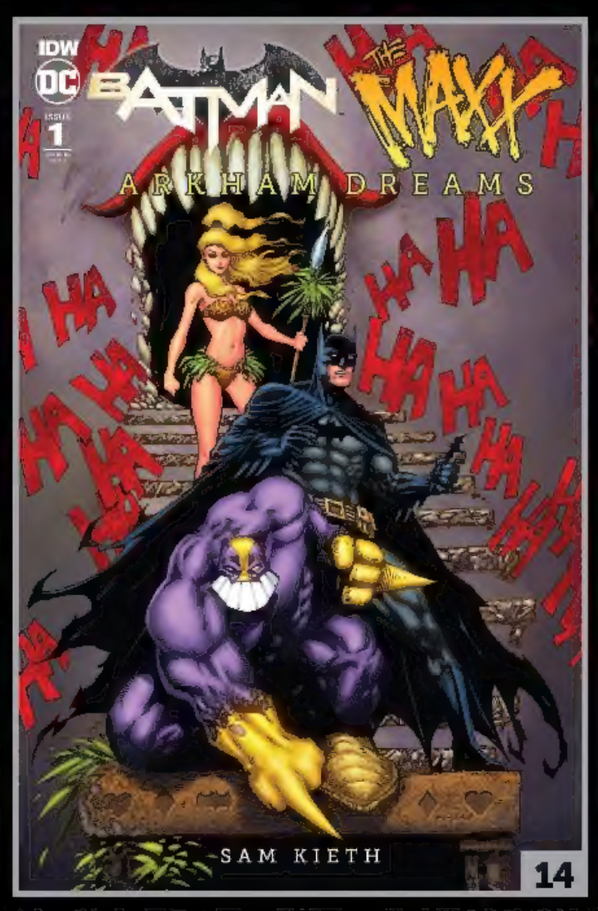
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